1:Nimuendajú E-5 (1941-1942) 1952
SQ20 Tucuna SQ20

Death and Burial

When a person is dying, all the kin within reach gather round him; otherwise the agony would be much prolonged. Hippolyto's wife fought death for two hours until the arrival of Nino, her husband's paternal uncle, who sent for her husband. Already unconscious, she expired as soon as Hippolyto arrived at her side. Paternal male relatives, primarily brothers and uncles, dig the grave, but other kin also help. They clip the hair, if it has grown excessively during illness, placing the surplus hair next to the body. Nino told me that, on the occasion of his father's death, his mother had the shaman Romão called in, who took down the invisible hammock of the deceased's soul (načii'), rolled it up, and placed it beside the body. At the dead person's side of the house are placed a bit of food and a little drink that he liked when he was alive. All the Tukuna whom I consulted agreed that in ancient times the body was buried, with knees flexed, in an urn; it was decorated with armbands, tooth necklaces, and glass beads. The deceased never had his weapons with him in the grave, lest his načii' use them against living persons. A pot was placed upside down over the mouth of the urn. Thus it was carried to the cemetery (ta'uke) and buried, not very deeply. Over the grave, which was sometimes marked with a stake of muirapiranga wood, the food was placed which previously had been put at the side of the corpse when it was in the house, or a little maize, water, and fire; otherwise, the načii' would come at night and disturb the provisions kept in the house. Highly regarded persons, especially children, were buried inside the house, which was not burned down. 763 764

There are no reports of secondary burial. Weeping of relatives for the deceased was, and is, moderate, and there are no attempts at suicide, mutilations, or injuries motivated by mourning. Upon returning from the burial, all bathe, rubbing themselves with calabash tree (*Crescentia cuyete*) leaves to free themselves of the smell of the corpse. The house is swept, but not the path to the cemetery. On that, however, they scatter the leaves of a plant called dęatę, which serve as flails, arraias (lit., rays, skates) for the načii', impeding their return. 765 [783]

On the left bank of the Igarapé da Rita, a little above Hippolyto's place, an ancient cemetery was discovered, containing many burial pots with bones and beads, covered with flat receptacles. Bates also refers to Tukuna urn burial: "The dead bodies of their chiefs are interred, the knees doubled up, in large jars under the floor of their huts." Tessmann describes a form of burial so different that his informant must have referred to funeral customs of some other tribe with which he was acquainted: 764 114 [172]

> Alle Leute, Häuptlinge, gewöhnliche Leute und Kinder werden gleichartig bestattet und zwar in einem Kanu das mit Holzplatten zugedeckt wird. Dieser Sarg wird nicht in den Häusern begraben sondern ausserhalb, in der Pflanzung.... Bei Zauberern wird die Leiche nicht wieder ausgegraben, wohl aber bei Lichtmenschen. Es geschieht nach etwa vier Monaten. Die Schädel und alle Knochen werden herausgenommen, sauber gereinigt, in Körbe betan und an einer besonderen Stelle, die Tauke genannt wird, von neuem bestattet. Es soll ein kleiner Hügel über dieser Stelle aufgehäuft werden.

Canoe burial was practiced by the Omágua, of whom Heriarte wrote in 1662: "When they die they are buried, taken to the river with great ceremony and with

1:Nimuendajú E-5 (1941-1942) 1952
SQ20 Tucuna SQ20

764 all that they possess of their property. And he who died is placed in a small canoe,
[114] which they say he uses for travelling in another world."

The last instances of urn burial probably took place at the end of the last century, since Nino's deceased mother told him that she had attended one. In their heyday, the rubber-collecting patrões obliged the Tukuna to bury their dead in
[177] Christian cemeteries and according to Christian custom, so that even today most of the Indians are thus buried. These graves are no different from those of the Neobrazilians. Those found a short distance behind the houses of isolated Indians never have a cross; in its place a post is sometimes put up.

769 Since ancient times, the Tukuna have been accustomed to visit the graves at intervals, taking leaf packages containing food and gourds with beverages. On these occasions they drink manioc beer at the grave, first taking care, however, to permit the načii' to drink first, lest, in the form of a weasel (ira'ra), it destroy the crops. Under Christian influence this ceremony later was set for All Souls' Day [*Dia de Finados*], the second of November. Lately, seeing that the Christians were removing and enjoying the Indians' offerings to the dead, the Tukuna have abandoned this practice of leaving food at the graves.

2: Nimuendaju E-5 (1941-1942) 1948
SQ20 Tucuna SQ20

is unnecessary; a boy and girl may meet at a feast and leave married at the end. The wife's parents never renounce their authority over her and do not permit the husband to take her far away, which results in a certain matrilocal tendency. 584 [591] [593]

Polygyny even today is considered licit, but cases of bigamy are rare. In the only case known, a famous man who was both priest and chief had three sisters as wives simultaneously. Other cases of sororate have occurred. The levirate, also formerly frequent, was considered desirable. 595 587

Jealousy may cause violent quarrels between husband and wife, but never murder and rarely divorce. Adultery, though causing scenes, is insufficient reason for divorce. Guilt is always placed on the woman. The father's authority in the family is great. 593 586 684

In case of robbery, the offended party requires restitution and sometimes is extremely severe with the thief. 685

Injuries and death occur almost exclusively when people are drunk during a feast, for alcohol stimulates certain *Tucuna* to fight. Drunkenness absolves the murderer from responsibility, but the victim's relatives always feel resentful and hostile toward him. 672 733

A house is the property of its builder, i.e., the head of the family. The clearing belongs to the woman by whom it was made. 423

The *Tucuna* no longer have chiefs as they are too individualistic to accept authority and as the civilized people have discredited the office by designating chiefs through whom they could exploit and oppress the Indians. Formerly, chiefs of local groups were heads of large families whose magic powers, intelligence, and ability in dealing with foreigners gave them prestige. There was never, however, a chief for the entire nation. 622 178

Death.—Until the end of the past century, the deceased and all his ornaments were placed in a large chicha jar which was covered with a vessel, buried in a cemetery, and the site sometimes marked with a rod of muirapiranga. Well-liked people sometimes were buried in the house. They put a little food, beverage, and a fire on the grave, periodically renewing it. Tessmann (1930, p. 564) incorrectly attributed secondary burial to the *Tucuna*. 764 [114]

WARFARE

The *Tucuna* are not warlike. They defended themselves against the *Omagua*, their principal enemies, and drove them to the banks of the Solimões River only when the latter had invaded their lands. They fought with arrows, poisoned spears, and round tapir-hide shields, and protected their paths with poisoned caltrops. They did not take prisoners or keep trophies from slain enemy. They never fought civilized people, except to avenge personal insults. 721 648 [411] [727]